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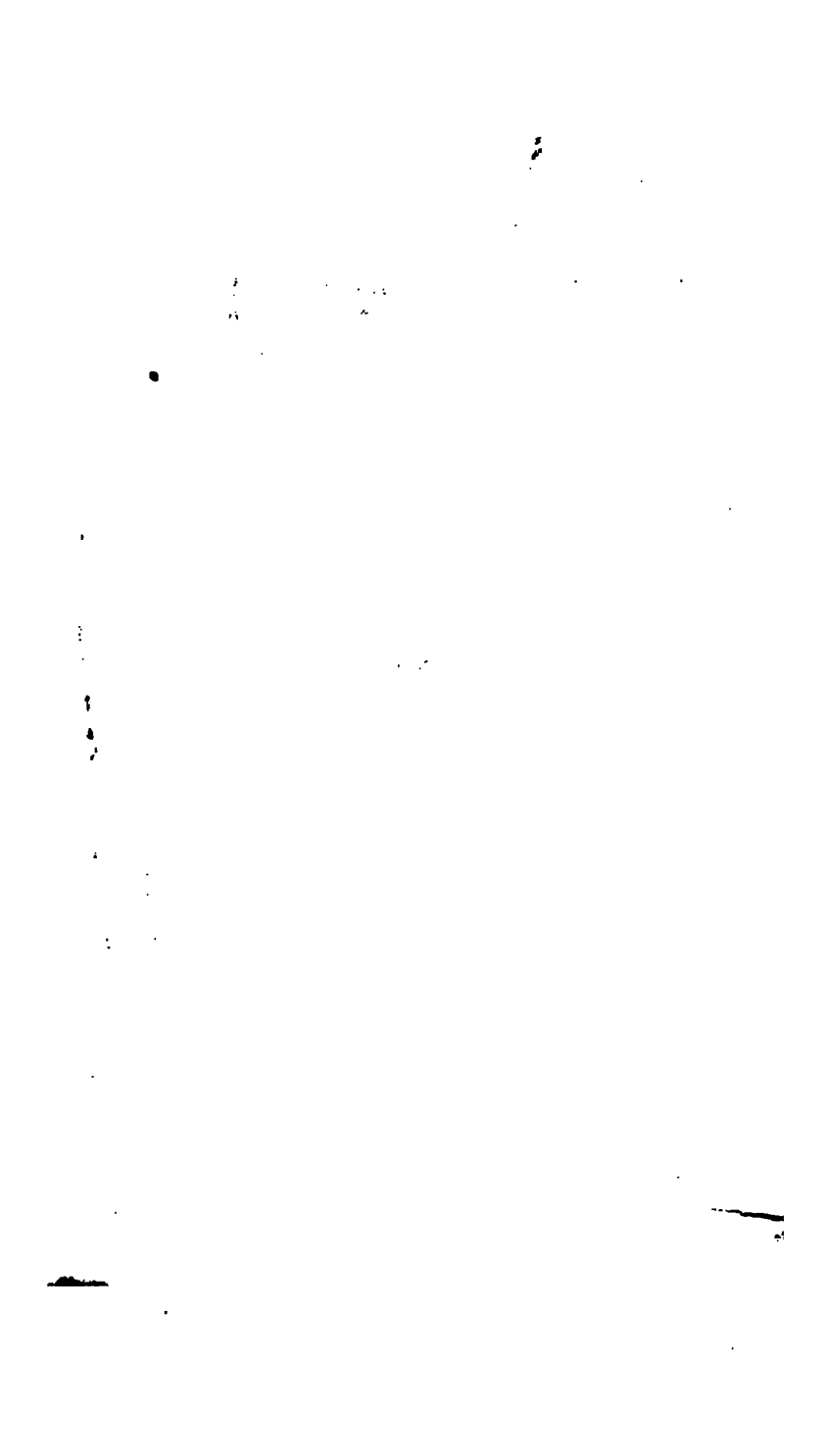
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537

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Thos



THE
537
BEECHEN TREE.

1.
A T A L E :

T O L D I N R H Y M E .

BY

F. W. THOMAS,

AUTHOR OF "CLINTON BRADSHAW," ETC.

Spare, woodman, spare the beechen tree.—*Campbell.*

I'll carve your name on barks of trees,
With true-love knots and flourishes.—*Hudibras.*

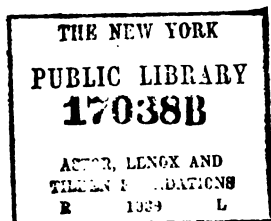
The course of true love never did run smooth.—*Shakespeare.*

NEW-YORK:

PUBLISHED BY HARPER AND BROTHERS,
82 CLIFF-STREET.

1844

3.



ENTERED, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1844, by
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CANTO I.

LOVE IN COUNTRY AND IN TOWN.

I.

'Twas on the outskirts of a wood,
A wood of tall and aged trees,
That gave a charm to solitude,
A murmur to the breeze;
It was when frequent falls the leaf,
And we begin to say that brief
And briefer grows the day;
When far away the evening sky
Looks sad and sober to the eye;
When darker grows the rivulet,
Where, in some tiny eddies' play,
The fallen leaves so fitful fret,
Like hope, when we would hold it yet,
And it would fain be far away.

THE BEECHEN TREE.

II.

How beautiful the beechen tree !

A beechen tree of giant mould,

Whose roots did many a rock enfold,

Entwining them, as you might see—

For, branching from the parent stem,

A velvet moss just covered them :

They sought the nurture of the brook,

That from the shade a deep green took,

And murmured like the lullaby

Of cradle-watchers, when they look

Upon the infant's closing eye.

III.

Forth stepping, like the timid deer,

And hearing her own step with fear,

On came a gentle maid ;

She crosses o'er the rivulet—

Her silken slipper is not wet—

Why should she be afraid ?

If fearful thus, why seek the spot ?

She seems spell-bound, and yet seems not :

Why stops she by the tree ?

We have volition where to go,

And we may wander to and fro,

Yet we may not be free!
For Love, though all unseen his chain,
Will draw us over land and main;
And though we meet as far between,
As winter wild from summer green,
Yet love, like heaven, will be above
The hearts that truly vow to love.

IV.

With step e'en as the maiden's light,
But not a step that e'er knew fright,
And followed by his faithful hound,
That marks his mood, and snuffs the ground,
Comes one with love-lit look;
He clasps her with his arms around,
As is yon water-lily bound
By the encircling brook :
And, as it palely droops to hear
The music of the whispering water,
She listens with a charm'd fear,
Bound by the spell which there has brought her;
The while her fair brow bends and beams,
Like that pale flower that loves the streams.
How to his heart he holds the flower !
"O! ever blessed be the hour

That brings thee, Helen, to my side ;
Our friends would frown I know, my bird,
If but our slightest words were heard—

But oh ! thou yet wilt be my bride :
For though we meet here but to part,
'Tis not with a divided heart.
Thou wert the soonest here to-day,
But no neglect kept me away ;
I know this hour—the rest, to me,
Are but this short hour's memory."

V.

"I came the sooner, love," said she,
With maidenly simplicity,
"Because, before the sun goes down,
Stern darkness in the woods will frown ;
And though I reach my home, while yet

The red clouds linger in the west,
Methinks dark forms the woods beset :

They trouble me with sad unrest.

How, yester-eve, the big trees moaned,
Methought for me they sighed and groaned ;
The screech-owl screeched above my path—
It seemed to haunt me with its wrath ;
And all the gentle birds have flown—
The loneliness is all my own."

VI.

"Love, this is autumn now, you know,
To other lands the wild birds go:
They only rest in summer bower,
And only stay while blooms the flower;
But, Helen, not thus let it be

With all this love that binds us now.
In winter, bare will be the tree,
No bird will sing upon the bough—
But see where I have taught the beech,
If either here should rove alone,
Long after this blest hour is flown,
The vows of both to tell to each.
Our names I've circled with a heart—

As thus I hold thee to mine own—
(And thus, though we afar may part,
As ever yet did fond ones sever,
The love that binds us holds forever.)

VII.

This beech tree was their trysting place:
There, oft in summer's fragrant eve,
Just when the red sun took his leave,
When the coy moon, with half hid face,
Peep'd o'er the eastern hills afar,
With here and there a radiant star,

When twilight came with sober mien,
And silence brooded o'er the scene,
Thither the maid would often stray,
Humming, may be, a laughing lay,
That told true-love was all untrue,
And made of nothing great ado.
She'd have them think, if she were heard,
She scorned the very love she sought,
And that she sung like careless bird,
A maiden who was free in thought,—
Who roamed, and roaming, trolled a glee,
Because she wanted company.

VIII.

Upon this eve they met to part,
Till spring again should clothe the vine;
They pledged their faith with beating heart,
And made the beechen tree their shrine.
He watched her white dress, glimmering bright
Through the dark woods—"Good night"—"Good
night."

IX.

Change we the scene: 'tis winter now;
The birds forsake the withered bough,

And beauty seeks the city.
How the *dear* belles the shops explore!
The cards are out a week or more—
It snows so! what a pity!
That rivulet, we rhymed about,
Is frozen o'er: Alas, I wonder
If water flows that hard ice under!
That whimpering hound! behold his track,
Into the moss he thrusts his snout—
'Gainst beechen tree he rubs his back.
Why is he there an earnest rover?
Seeks he our lady-love and lover?

•

X.

The night is o'er them, but the lamps
Throw forth a gladness on the night—
With others, beautiful and bright,
Despising colds and coughs and cramps,
They press to Mrs. Jones's rout.
She's lit with gas her great big hall—
This rout will rout all others out,
The crowning victory of all.

XI.

Our hero, Mr. Joseph King,
Most generally called Joe—

Is with the *ton* the very thing—

For Josey is the go.

King has no gift of dirty dollars ;

His wealth lies in poetic mine,

Which in gilt page may some day shine.

His feeling, fierce or funny, chimes

With his who turned more heads and collars,

Than e'en himself has written rhymes.

So unfamiliar was his eye

With Mammon's face, that he has said,

When he has passed a corner by, *

Whilst boys were tossing cents on high,

Vain were his efforts to descry,

As near his foot the metal roll'd,

Whether 'twas copper, brass, or gold,

Or which fell upwards, tail or head !

But looking much like Byron's bust,

And winning gentle tailor's trust,

The Peer's with Brummel's arts combined

(At least he thought so when he "wined")

In him to strike the public mind.

His eye was of the Byron hue,

Where you could see the thought shine through ;

And, better than the bard's, his feet

Were beautiful, and both complete.

XII.

Our heroine, Miss Merryvale,—

Her Christian name is Helen—

Rains influence—as thick as hail,—

All other maids excelling.

Helen and King were friends in youth,

(“But whispering tongues can poison truth,
And constancy dwells in realms above”)

So Coleridge sings of early love :

And once it dwelt beside the beech—

No matter, let the moral teach.

XIII.

Miss Merryvale is dress'd with taste—

With taste she always dresses—

A zone is round her virgin waist,

And bright flowers in her tresses.

That full-blown fellow in her curl

Bobs with an everlasting twirl,

As, with a nod like Juno's, she

Nods to the goodly companie.

Prouder it looks than when on high

It flaunted at a flaming sky ;

For now, no more on thorny stem,

It graces beauty's diadem.

Her neck is bare, her shoulders too,
And with the cold they had been blue,
But for the flakes of mealy hue—

 The powder of the pearl—
Which, like the frost on frozen shore,
Or web of gossamer, was o'er
 The fascinating girl.

Deepest the drift in hollow places—
Thus maids, forsaken by the Graces,
And thin with hope deferred,
(I only tell what I have heard,
So little of the sex I've seen
I hold each one a fairy queen,)
Appear in such a garb of flour,
And talk with such continuous power,
 And try to look so dapper,
That one might swear the miller's maid
Had come, most naturally arrayed,
 And borne away the clapper.

XIV.

That powder is a great tranagression
 Against the rosy cheek ;
It buries up the whole expression,
 It makes the eye look weak,

Unnatural the tress,
And throws upon the brow a blight,
As though it had grown gray with fright
At single blessedness.
Pray, who would such a woman toast,
Unless he meant to drink to one
Long, long since, with the buried gone,
And now an awful ghost—
Which, like all ghosts that earthward rove,
Must horrify the hues of love.

XV.

Behold how short the ladies' dresses,
How curlless too they wear their tresses!
This does not prove at all the slattern,
Or love for modesty's scant pattern.
No, but it proves that innocence
Will never make to shame pretence,
But goes about like naked truth,
To show its guilelessness, forsooth!

XVI.

No—while I write, free floats the curl,
And clothed is every blushing girl.
God bless the sex, we love them still,
E'en let them change, as change they will;

There's one thing certain, that their hearts
Are yet unmoved by fashion's arts—
That still they throb within the breast,
And guard it for love's chosen rest.

XVII.

Our Josey, Joe, or Mr. King,
Is dancing with the widow Lead;
He cut for her the pigeon wing,
And Helen she cut Josey dead;
But Josey knows which side his bread
Is buttered, and he goes ahead:
Like Hudibras he felt expand
His heart as Cupid took his stand—
“Upon the widow's jointure land.”¹
O widow! blessed widowhood!
Thou goest about a doing good,
Curest the wounds of maiden's darts—
Thou good Samaritan of hearts.

XVII.

“Fat, fair, and”—something,—Mrs. Lead
Has often been admonish-éd,
That lovers seek her pelf;
But she avers that she sees through
A millstone, ma'am, as well as you,

And that they seek herself.
She has her charms, and she displays 'em,
And in her gaudiest garb arrays 'em,
And shall they not be sought? -
Do not the best beaux crowd beside her,
And dare they come there to deride her,
Or are they ever brought?
And pray, I ask you, flirting miss,
Is there not something more in this
Than you have ever thought?
Are all her charms—her eyebrow's dye,
The rosiest hue that wealth can buy,
A bust, formed for capacious sigh,
In nature's prodigality,
To pass—and all for nought?
Whoever knew a man to wed,
And merely for his daily bread?
No—he would rather beg it.
Ride in her coach and eat her meat!
No—he would rather never eat,
And would forever leg it!

XIX.

And Helen, not neglectful she
Of her proud sex's dignity—

If, in the mazes of the dance,
Perchance she met her loved of all,
You'd think that nothing met her glance
Between her and the wall,
Her eye around is thrown so free,
Her laugh rings out so merrily.

How soon a slighted woman learns

To hide that pang, however deep;
Though in her tortured breast it burns,
Her bosom-thoughts seem all asleep.

You'd think that peace was resting there,

With her light shawl upon her breast,
That exercise and healthy air
And day-dreams that be wondrous fair,
With hopes that sweetest fruitage bear,
Had caused the slight unrest.

Oh! know you not her young heart bleeds,—

That in this laughing mood
The Pelican of passion feeds

Her ever hungry brood!

(The two extremes approach, we know,
And, therefore, often laughs our woe:

Thus tells that laugh that rung so loud
Of withered hopes within their shroud.)

XX.

The blight that falls on love, is like
The lightnings of a summer's sky—
Which, when the weather's warmest, strike
The topmost branches hanging high;
The branches where the wild bird builds,
As freest there from earthly ills,
A nestler in the summer air,
With folded wing and wild note there—
Merrily singing to the day
That throws from its abounding quiver,
Blessings in the living ray,
That laughs o'er hill and dale and river.
Merrily thus in life's gay morn,
Merrily young love builds his bower,
Forgetful of the growing thorn,
Forgetful that the storm is born
In the warm sunny hour.

XXI.

But Helen is a girl of spirit;
She did the noble gift inherit
From the maternal side.
It is her passion and her pride
To keep that heir-loom of her gender,—
And if you doubt it, just offend her.

But let me tread my back tracks first,
Before the shaken vials burst.

XXII.

A bachelor, whose gouty toe
Admonished him he must forego
 The tightness of the pump,
And lean, like Lara, 'gainst the wall,²
As though he had, above them all
Who gathered to the crowded ball,
 Of self-esteem the bump,—
Whose weight of many years below,
Were traced in certain marks of snow,
 Thick-coming on his head—
Such as so oft, in winter morn,
We see upon the withered thorn,
 Or on the house-top spread.
This bachelor, John Job McMyer,
Sometimes called, in joke, The Friar,
Because he had the sleeky look
Of friars in the picture-book—
A kind of prinky prim precision,
Which stiff-necked men would call decision,
 And worldly men deceit—
This was Helen's gay gallant.
At widow-wooing Joe, aslant

He looked, and played with Helen's brooch;
And thus the two extremes approach—

And they at last may meet,
And winter on his breast so old,
Lull love until it dies of cold.

XXIII.

On crisped snow, 'neath starry lights,
The revellers for home depart:
How the wind cuts the dandies' tights,
And penetrates the cloaked up heart!
That Jack-frost has as keen a power
As love in his consummate hour.
The age of chivalry is past!
What lover now would Raleigh play—
'Neath woman's foot his mantle cast,
That she might take her earthless way?
Her earthless way! what, spoil his cloak!
Why that might do for hearts of oak
To win a proud queen's heart;
For winning that gives power and pelf,
But here each dandy cloaks himself,
And plays a wiser part.
Not only will he not downspread
His mantle for the lady's tread,

Her pruned foot to save—
He'd scarcely fold it round her form,
To shield her from the driving storm,
(For her light cloak cannot be warm,)
Tho' she herself should crave.
A hint that it is cold won't do,
The gentleman is quite cold too,
And hints can coldly take—
And he would wonder, with a grace,
(When next with friend in cozy place,)
How any woman had the face
Such a *cool* hint to make.

XXIV.

How oft consumption, arm in arm,
Hastens with beauty to the ball,—
Gives to her cheek a tint to charm,
A higher, holier hue, to all
The features of her youthful face—
And to her form a drooping grace,
Such as a rainless summer gives
To flowers, that in the early spring,
First won the bird to fold its wing,
And sing the merry life it lives

XXV.

How often, when the ball is over,
And by her walks her wooing lover,
 Gay with the radiance of the dance,
 And with the life-long high romance,
Indwelling in her happy eye;—
How oft consumption steals the sigh
On which Love reasons whence or why
With a self-pleasing phantasy—
Thinking that sigh is all his own,
Yet wondering at its saddened tone :
More anxious still to wear the rose
Whose hectic colour comes and goes,
Because on lonely stem it blows ;
And so her sighs are all for him,
 Love changes not with changing breath—
And such are like the martyr's hymn,
 That proves the sufferer true in death.

XXVI.

The widow with her worshipper—
He gave his cloak and arm to her :
Of all who left the ball that night,
 He showed of courtesy the most ;

Throwing, with care, his lantern's light,
Like light-house o'er a troubled coast,
While proudly in the track roll'd she,
Like a gold-freighted argosy.

XXVII.

And Josey stepp'd her heart beside,
Like little boat which painter strong
(The widow's arm was stout, not long,)
Holds to the ship, while on the tide
It cometh near nor parteth wide,
As they together gayly glide.
How close he wrapped her in his cloak—
And as the wind upon him broke,
And wide his parted coat-skirts flew,
(To illustrate the scene anew,)
He seemed like storm-worn struck seamew,
Trying to breast a bitter blast,
And perch upon a frigate's mast.

XXVIII.

And Helen coldly—(understand,
With a cold heart as well as hand,)
And with a consciousness that came
Like chill upon a fevered frame,

Placed her white arm in gay McMyer's.
Fast falls the snow upon her brow,
But faster falls it on the fires
Volcanic in her bosom now.
Alas! those fires it cannot tame—
They fiercer burn like sprinkled flame,
Which, when it feels the waters first,
Shrouds luridly in black'ning smoke,
Through which a flash has scarcely burst,
Till out again the whole up-breaketh,
Like sleeping giant when he waketh—
All maddened by a stroke.

XXIX.

Home—home, she's by her lonely hearth;
The street has not a single tread,—
And desolating is the dearth
That seems around her spread.
How sadly—O! how sadly steals,
In such an hour, the blighting thought
O'er dreams that flattered hope reveals—
As if, like nursing bird, she brought
To her young brood the food they sought,
And fluttered off, their wings to try,
But not to leave them, lone, to die.

XXX.

Joe reached his room and stirred his fire,
And made his whiskey punch quite strong,
And thought awhile on gay McMyer,
And thoughtful hummed a song.
He fixed his eye upon the grate,
And, castle-building, formed a dwelling,
In which, with Mrs. Lead, elate
He lived :—somehow, in spite of fate,
There stood the tearful Helen—
And then, with feelings truly human,
He wrote the following lines

ON WOMAN :

How beautiful is woman's life,
When first her suppliant woos and kneels,
And she with young and warm hopes rife,
Believes he deeply feels.

Then day is gladness, and the night
Looks on her with its starry eyes,
As though it gave her all their might
Over men's destinies.

Wrapp'd watchers of the skyey gleam,
Then men are like astronomers,

Who gaze and gladden at the beam
Of that bright eye of hers.

And if a frown obscure its light,
'Tis like a cloud to star-struck men,
Through the long watches of the night :—
O! for that beam again!

How heart-struck that astronomer,
A gazer on the starry zone,
When first he looked in vain for her—
The lovely Pleiad gone!

But men watch not the stars always,
And though the Pleiad may be lost,
Yet still there are a thousand rays
From the surrounding host.

(And woman, long before the grave
Closes above her dreamless rest,
May be man's empress and his slave,
And his discarded jest.

)

Still may that Pleiad shine afar—
But pleasure-led o'er summer seas,
Who dwells upon a single star
Amid the Pleiades?

Man courts the constellations bright
That beam upon his bounding bark,
Nor thinks upon the left, lone light,
Till all above is dark.

Then, when he knows nor land nor main,
And darkly is his frail bark tost,
He courts the separate star in vain,
And mourns the Pleiad lost.

CANTO II.

THE CHALLENGE.

I.

THE flame that burst from mutual hearts,
 That skewered were by cupid's darts,
 Like tender quails in huxtering marts—
 Flickers that flame in feeble flashes,
 Like that from wood that's nearly ashes

II.

But where is Joseph King, I pray?
 Say, pours he blessings on the day
 He supplicated Mrs. Lead,
 With eyes upturned and arms outspread,
 Or when he wooed Miss Merryvale,
 Where truthful love should aye prevail,
 Beneath the beechen tree—

Where the bright sky its azure hung,
And the bird its sweet notes sung;
And where the flower its fragrance flung,
And merrily hummed the bee;
Where twined above the juicy vine
About the aged sycamore,
Hoar witness of the days lang syne,
Which truant school-boys oft explore,
Hanging the lucid waters o'er,
And keeping close within the wood
That skirts their stolen solitude?
And where the streamlet's pebbly bed
Is hidden by the leaves o'erhead,
Like beauty's curtained sleep—
In which the overhanging sky,
Where'er the stream is clear and deep,
Appears with all its clouds to lie,
As if it hid a watching eye—
A guardianship to keep
Upon the gentle waves, and know
What little fishes did below.

III.

King was a student of the law,
And over my Lord Coke he pored,

But even there he fancies saw,
For the dear Muses he adored ;
And when a glimpse of them he caught,
Left was the legal mine unwrought.
He and Mr. Job McMyer
Had been as thick as flames and fire :
They boarded in a house together
With our gay widow, Mrs. Lead ;
But somehow, lately, murky weather
Between the two had spread.

IV.

'Twas natural—for Mr. King
Thought clearly it was not the thing
In Mr. Job McMyer,
Placed personally as they were,
So soon to take his place with her,
The lady of his lyre.
For although Mr. King had said
He meant to dance with Mrs. Lead,
Yet Job McMyer knew,
Or ought so well to know him,
That Helen still he had in view,
Should the gay widow throw him.

V.

Now in his gallant rival's sight,
Young King, as clearly, had no right
Such notions high to hold—
Monopolizing ladies two—
And therefore soon between them grew
A manner miffed and cold.
By fireside often and by table,
Our Joe, to show his depth of head,
Would talk, as he thought, darkly able
Of law, before the listening Lead;
Saying, the habits must be stable
Of students who are deeply read—
Hinting how many hours of toil
He bowed before the midnight oil.

VI.

And often, with the stately friar,
Discoursed he on commercial law,
And when insurances expire,
Citing full many an ancient saw.
As deep the friar held himself
As any book on Joe King's shelf,
Of how such matters pass:
For fearlessly he stood on 'Change,
A leader in the mammoth range
Of the commercial class.

VII.

In fact, the friar would sometimes get
Our Joe his depth beyond—
“As little wanton boys that swim
On bladders” in a pond,
Soon as they leave the water’s brim,
Are by the bigger ones thrust in,
Which makes their Sunday breeches wet,
And puts them in a pouting pet.

VIII.

Yet truly our shrewd friar knew
Nothing of law, except a few
Insurance points, which, listening, he
Had caught in court and company;
But in *as-surance*, Job was strong
As Joe in words and flowing song.
And King would sometimes start a point,
And friend McMyer’s nose disjoint :
For instance—Job one day asserted,
That in no point, nor in no sense,
Was hearsay heard in evidence.
This notion Josey controverted,
Saying, that—“*Declarations made
By dying man ’neath mortal blow,*

*Could be with all their force arrayed
'Gainst his indicted foe."*¹

This Job with much contempt denied,
Averting, to a case like that
The maxim of the law applied
Plainly and palpably and pat.

IX.

But our young poet, by the judge,
The Honorable Ely Fudge,—
To whom they both submitted,—
Corrected him of his mistake,
And recommended him to take
Forthwith to books, for his own sake,
As he was to be pitied.
Then proud McMyer stately grew
At once—and with no more ado,—
Joe he called a fool.

(All this was said before the Lead,)
King, like a beet, grew bloody red,
And straight let fly at Job's proud head
A fancy music stool.

Quickly McMyer dodged—as quick
As dips a duck, when shot-guns click.
"Shame! shame!" cried out the widow, "shame."
True to the mark was King's hot aim—

But for the padding in the seat,
Job's dying declarations might
Have been sighed in sad Lead's sight,
And at her very feet.

X.

Wrathy to raving grew the friar—
But for the lady and the judge
Most desperate had been his ire;
Fudge held him so he could not budge,
While she caught King within her arms
And raised the house with her alarms.
Impulsively, Job felt his head,
Then bowed profound to Mrs. Lead,
Then frowned with ireful gloom;
Then cast on King a flashing eye
Of ball and powder prophesy,
And hurried to his room—
Where anger did the best it could
To screw his spunk to fighting mood.

XI.

But many a woman has seemed stone,
As though she were of marble made,
Till all at once she changed her tone
By moonlight in the myrtle shade;

And many a beau in heated hall
Has thought he could young Mary woo,
And win her from the loving all,
And yet the thing he did not do :
And many a boy will taunt a ghost,
When seated snug by cozy fire,
Who does not care to prove his boast,
And in the churchyard front its ire ;
And many a man is fiercely brave
When woman's by, with tongue and fist,
Who does not choose to point a glove
Or pistol in the bloody list.

XII.

Uncertain, love and hope and fear,
Uncertain, dark or sunny sky,
Uncertain when shall come the bier,
Who first must mourn the dark hearse near,
And shed the unavailing tear—
But certainly, we all must die.
Yet that sad certainty we keep
As far off in our mortal lot
As possible. And who would sleep
The leaden sleep from pistol shot
Or sabre cut ? as dashing on
Was killed the “ haughty Marmion”—

Of whose last scene in battle plain
Thought Job, with hot and throbbing brain;
For he had heard, on many a night,
His whilom friend the scene recite,
While Mrs. Lead would clap her fan,
And King would seem the very man :
Job's heart grew chilly at the thought,
And he resolved 'twas base and cruel
In any man to fight a duel;
But then he felt his life was sought,
And that he would be justified
To wait the change of time and tide,
A due revenge to gather—
For burned his brow to think that King,
A youngster, scarcely out of school,
Of whom he might be father,
With homicidal hand should fling
At him a murderous music stool !

XIII.

But peace, like halcyon o'er the wave,
Came to his stormy breast, and gave
Falstaff's gift, discretion—
When came a "d—d good natured friend,"
On purpose these mild views to end,
And lead him to transgression.

XIV.

Dobbin, the wight was named—a quiz;
He wore an elongated phiz,

Like death in schoolboys' primer.
A humorist, he sought variety
In the vagaries of society—

And, like a frolic swimmer,
To the bright places he'd resort,
Where he could laugh and lave and sport.
But then he was as shy the while,
As Indian paddling to an isle,
Whose habitants he means to take,
Ere from their slumbers they awake,
And tie them to the flaming stake.

XV.

He liked King best, for King and he
Had frolicked oft in company,

Like hounds in couples hunting;
And they belonged to the same corps,
And often tramp'd the city o'er,

Behind the drum and bunting,
While from the sash the Lead would stoop,
And smile upon the glittering troop.—
He knew that King was brave as Tell,
Or Bruce on native heather,

And Job he thought would cut a swell,
But show the craven feather ;
That, therefore, lots of fun might be
Won from their passion's anarchy.

XVI.

He prompted King of his design,
And then he sought the shut-up friar :
" I've come," he said, " as friend of thine,
To know, dear sir, if you require,
In this felonious case of King,
In this outrageous dire assault,
(And that you live is not his fault,)
My humble aid in any thing :
Pistols and coffee, sir, for two,
Is all, I fear, that we can do."

XVIII.

" My dearest friend," quoth brave McMyer,
Shuddering, as though the leaden rain
From bloody King was in his brain,
Trying to make that shudder dire,
Like roused-up lion's shaking mane—
" Your friendly frankness I admire :
I felt at first his base heart's blood
Must the green grass incarnadine,

And flow in torrents like a flood
Upon high honor's sacred shrine.
I sought my room, by passion stirred,
Fearing to brain him at a word.
Don't press me to a contest, don't,
For let me fight my morals won't:
But tell me what is said, I pray,
About this most disgraceful fray?"

XVIII.

A twinkle flashed in Dobbin's eye—
A humor, quiet, secret, sly—
He gravely said, "The Judge, they say,
To hold you had the hardest work;
You jumped at King like turbaned Turk,
And that he sought to get away.
Between us both and this old chair,
If Mrs. Lead had not been there,
You would have had no rumpus;
But King, when he no danger sees,
Is valiant as young Hercules,
Whose valor had no compass.
The folks believe, beyond a doubt,
That you will call the assaulter out,
And that apologies he'll yield,
And beg off from the fatal field."

XIX.

Said shrewd McMyer, "Dearest sir,
In estimating character,
Are you quite certain you don't err?"
Beside his nose grave Dobbin laid
His finger, as he serious said—
"Err!—surely not, for King, the brave,
(You know with him I'm intimate,
Though his rank cowardice I hate,)
Told me he sought no bloody grave,
And that he couldn't be made to fight."
"A high resolve," exclaimed the friar,
(Ironical in his deep ire,)
"Now, such sweet conduct I admire!
I'll challenge him before 'tis night;
I'll print and post him through the city,
Till schoolboys make the theme a ditty—
I'll kick him through the streets, by thunder,
Until the very dogs shall wonder."

XX.

"That's just," said Dobbin, "what I'd do,
I'd kick him while I'd boot or shoe,
As long as I could find him,
I'd make him think an Indian band,
With rods in every brawny hand,

Was pressing hard behind him ;
And never council house should spread
Its safety o'er his suffering back—
That, like the hounds Actæon fled,
My cowhide should be on his track,
Till all his bacon had been flayed,
Unless apologies were made."

XXI.

" But, Mr. Dobbin," said the friar,
" Without the least exaggeration,
Just tell me what you would require
(You know, dear sir, my rank and station—
Before you answer, do reflect,)
Of King, sir, plumply and direct ?"
After reflection, long and deep,
Said Dobbin—" You, if King's not fled,
Before you take a wink of sleep,
A pistol holding in each hand,
Should seek his office and demand
Written apologies for what
The music stool has done your head,
Or a duello on the spot.
For, injured sir, I'm satisfied
That King, before he'll fight, will make
(For carcase, not for conscience' sake)

A due atonement to your pride."
And forth he went, to load and bring
His pistols to the foe of King.

XXII.

How often will the poet's rhyme,
The aptness of a heart-learned thought,
Come to the mind, like dreams unsought,
And with the passing subject chime,
As if to order they were made,
When truly it was first displayed
On subject different as can be !
As different as the fire's loud bell
Is from the vesper tones that swell
At evening, peacefully.
For instance, in these lines of Scott,
Put " friar " where you " maiden " blot :
" Ask me not what the *maiden* feels,
Left in that dreadful hour alone ;
Perchance her reason stoops and reels—
Perchance a courage not her own
Braces her mind to desperate tone."

XXIII.

Dobbin, meanwhile, had told King all,
Then charged his pistols full with ball,

But pulpy ball of blood-red berry,
About the size of largest cherry,†
Such as are put in tarts,
Which ladies after dinner take,
And use up when they merry make,
Just as they use up hearts ;
In doing which they're seldom slow,
Whene'er the hearts are made of dough.

XXIV.

Then Dobbin went to Job's abode,
Who felt the while as bad as did
His namesake in the Jewish code,
When he was in the ashes hid ;
But he had passed the Rubicon—
Rome, in the shape of Mrs. Lead,
And his abused and aching head,
And what the world might say, had said,
Required the dark deed should be done.
And could it be that King had fled ?
From Dobbin's stay it might be so—
Perhaps apologies from Joe
He waited to write fairly out !
But Dobbin came, and went the doubt ;
For forth in each hand, from his pocket,

A pistol he deliberate drew,
Turned each one over to the view,
Pronounced each one hair trigger true,
And straight prepared to cock it—
When Job made quickly the request,
That he would let him do the rest.

XXV.

When both before a table stood,
And deep drank Job of flaming flood,
Which Indians call fire-water ;
An element which stirs the spunk
To deeds of desperate slaughter,
And sometimes makes the drinker drunk.

XXVI.

Thus having drank, the friar took
The pistols, and with Roman look,
From brandy-flashing eye,
Sought King, who in his office sat,
Demurely as a tabby cat,
Who knows the tricks of Mr. Rat,
Which she won't *ratify*.

XXVII.

“ Sir,” said the friar, addressing King,—
At the same moment offering

A loaded pistol to his view,—
“ There’s one of *three* things you must do,”
(For Job, in mercy, thought he’d give
Another chance to Joe to live,)
“ Decide at once which you prefer ;
To beg my pardon or to fight,—
And one of us must die outright,—
Or now to leave the city, sir !”

XXVIII.

“ What, here !” said King, with well feigned fright,
Snatching the pistols at the sight,
“ Come you with an intent to kill ?
Sir, you shall die before I will !”
And as the lightning, quick he shot
Both pistols at the friar’s head.
They hit him plump, those berries red,
And down he fell upon the spot,
Calling out murder ! with a cry
That would have made the cold dead start,
(If they for mortal sounds had ear,)
And give wild welcome to the bier
That soon must draw their dark homes near.
The terror-stricken passers-by
Rush in, with palpitating heart,

And gather round the fallen man,
From whom it seemed the life-blood ran,
For red was brow and red was cheek,
And he in vain essayed to speak.
“Give him,” they said, “a little breath;”
“Sir, who has done this deed of death?”
And all called out to give him air,
Yet crowded close to hear and stare.

XXIX.

“Alas!” said sad McMyer, sighing,
“Ah! gentlemen, I feel—I’m dying—
O Lord! my brain is rent and riven;—
My dying declarations are—
Let them in evidence be given—
They’ll give him to the gallows tree,
That that man, standing right up there,
Dressed all in black, with coal-black hair,
Who laughs with such hysteric stare,
Named Joseph King, has murdered me!”

CANTO III.


THE WAY OF THE WORLD.

I.

Job died not. Still he lives and thrives ;
But he must have a cat's nine lives,
And with mortality dispense,
If he outlive the merriment
That through the town and country went
Upon his dying evidence.

II.

Job died not ; but he roams afar,
Away beneath some other star,
An exile from his former haunts,
Of which, alas, no more he vaunts.
He changed his station and his name—
A wig he got and clothing changed—



Quite thin and lantern-like became,
And as a traveller widely ranged ;
But came not back, nor ever spoke
Of that expatriating joke.
And when, unknown, a monstrous tale,
When he was by, was told about it,
He looked, 'tis true, a little pale,
But then he did not seem to doubt it.

III.

He wore a face, say half resigned,
Like one who has a troubled mind,
And struggles not to show it ;
Who glances at you, inkling, shy,
As of himself in you he'd spy
A knowledge of some awful lie ;
Sometimes as if he would defy
Your tattling—then imploringly—
Then doubting if you know it.
And sometimes, too, his former look,
Like meaning in an ancient book,
Would forth obscurely gleam :
And often, like the mighty sun,
When envious clouds of deepest dun
Darken the glorious race he'd run,
His face would blushing beam.

IV.

But oftenest of all, he wore
The look of one from Stygian shore,
Who, by the god, was driven thence
To mend his dying evidence,
And state it was not wound of lead,
(Widow or metal, be it said,)
But fright that lowly laid his head.

V.

'Twas just a week from the dark day
Of that most foul, but bloodless fray,
When Job had been six days away,
A wanderer, none knew where,
That King, with album in his hand,
Called on that lady of the land,
Whose acres made her fair,
And gave her power, by golden chain,
To hold him in her glittering train.

VI.

His step was confident, like one
Who feels the battle has been won;
On that gilt-edged memento page,
Which pleasantly his thoughts engage,

He'd copied lines which he had written
For Helen, when he first was smitten,
 With hopes that he had caught her ;
And by those *lines* there hung a *hook*,
With which he hoped, by hook or crook,
 To fish in deeper water.
But lines that catch a little fish,
Won't bring a bouncer to your dish.

LINES IN MRS. LEAD'S ALBUM.

This book, fair Lady, love's own votive shrine,
Where all yield homage, and I, humblest, mine,
May well record a heart-felt tribute, due
Since its first impulse was awaked by you.
Lady, when others spoke of woman's power,
And blessed the meeting, feared the parting hour ;
Told of the love-bower, of the greetings bland,
The electric fluid of the thrilling hand,
The sweet contagion of the mutual look,
Where truth was read as in the poet's book ;
The whispered tone that trembled to be heard,
The silence, love-fraught, more than warmest word,
The hope that clothed the summer bower at even
With all the rainbow hues of smiling heaven,
Where was *her* presence, like a gift of light

Making each thing around her beauty—bright :
When others told all this I've laughed the thought,
Pronounced it folly, or believed it naught ;
But now, O Lady ! I have lived to prove
The truth, the strength, the constancy of love.
As those who sought the oracles of old,
And to them only their heart-feelings told,
The fateful answer being the behest,
To make them hopeless or to make them blest ;
Thus I, as first from you the impulse came,
Bear to the altar its most sacred flame.
You have my heart, my worship, and my vow—
What shall my fate be, Lady ? speak it now.
If 'tis propitious, wherefore should I speak—
Your heart will tell you language here is weak ;
If 'tis unkind, O ! give some Lethean spell
To calm the anguish of my sad farewell !

VII.

Oft smiled the lady, while she read,
Which King, of course, propitious thought,
Believing that the fish was caught ;
And low he spoke—and she, he said,
Was unto him last love and first—
That in those verses, not his worst,

His swollen heart had from him burst,
Like waters from a fountain head.

VIII.

Never a word the Lady uttered,
Till King's wild words had all ran out,
And then she blushed and faintly muttered,
The lines were beautiful, no doubt ;
But that she'd read them oft before,
In album of Miss Merryvale :
That sad she'd be for evermore,
If there was truth in his fond tale.
" Do let me with you, sir, prevail,
To let this hopeless passion end ;
I still esteem you as a friend—
Further my feelings may not tend.
In kindness to you, Mr. King,
A just reserve aside I'll fling—
I hope you'll bear no taint of grudge"—
" Who else," cried King, " is in the list ?"—
Clenching his hand in shape of fist.—
" I've not been able to resist
The Honorable Ely Fudge !"

IX.

Morn, in the merry month of May,
And young Spring, like a maiden gay,

In her best bib and tucker dressed,
With mantle green o'er budding breast,
Tries with old Time to flirt,
To dally with his locks so gray,
And slyly slip his scythe away;
While he, to use a vulgar phrase,
Regardless of the maiden's ways,
Continues to cut dirt.
"Go it, old fellow," said the Kemble,¹
Addressing this same Father Time,
And if a lady wont dissemble—
A lady and a lady poet,
And at his wrinkling footsteps tremble,
But freely speak her thoughts sublime,
And bid the daring gray-beard go it,
Though all the wondering world should know it—
Why I may say what I have said,
"Cut dirt!"—which meaneth,—Go ahead.

X.

The fact is, Fanny, that the fair,
Though they won't speak, or print, or show it,
Shrink from a man with silver hair,
And never bid the gray-beard go it!
And, therefore, have they railed at you—

Firstly, for being skyey blue ;
And secondly, for speaking pat
Of this thing, Fanny, and of that.

XI.

It happened once upon a day,
(Fair Fanny—be this tale between us,)
Before the Medicean Venus,
(Which is the very type of Her
Who rose from ocean's veiling spray,
When man became her worshipper,)
That many stood admiring much
The artist's more than mortal touch,
And one whose fame was not so fair
As to let sleep her guardian care,
Turned frowning from the marble white,
Saying, she could not stand the sight,
Which she pronounced indecent, quite.
Another, cold as unsunned snow,
Except when Virtue made her glow—
Said, " If from the cold marble aught
That was immoral had been caught,
'Twas surely from improper thought."
Fanny, when next you write a journal,
Just put this fact in your diurnal.

XII.

Morn in the Spring time's merry day,
The merry streamlet throws its spray,
Not fearing winter on its way ;
Merry in greenwood is the bird,
Merry on greensward is the herd,
And merrily the branches swing,
And merrily the squirrels spring ;
Merry in meadow is the bee—
A merrier voice ear hath not heard
Than Nature with her minstrelsy.
Now, merry school-boys in the morn,
Bound to school with merry spring ;
How merrily the milkmaids sing !
Roses are now on every thorn,
But sad is Mr. Joseph King.

XIII.

The lady Lead is married now
To the peace-maker, Ely Fudge—
And though a boy has blest their vow
King has not swallowed all his grudge ;
The buried hatchet shows a point,
As shows your fist the knuckle joint.
'This very morn he met a girl,

With a plump infant in her arms ;
Struck with the babe's display of pearl,
And with the rosy nurse's charms,
He stopped and, musingly and mild,
Inquired the parents of the child ?
The maiden pass'd him careless by,
Scarce noticing his flattering eye,
And answered with ill-hidden scorn,
That nearly rose to notes of laughter,
'Twas Mrs. Fudge's latest born !
Dark was King's brow for long hours after.
He therefore thought he'd take a walk,
And with the goddess Nature talk,
The only one of female gender
That did not seem a base pretender.

XIV.

How naturally his footsteps turned,
To where his youthful heart had burned,
Beneath the beechen tree !
He went along a winding path,
That like our wayward passions hath
A wild variety.
He seemed in pensive pilgrim state,
Like one who wends to mourn his fate,
Forth to a far countrie.

Forth to the shrine where he had knelt,
When first the thrill divine was felt ;
Forth to the shrine he had forsaken
For one that was the earthlier far ;
What ! dreams he that he will be taken—
That is, that he can save his bacon—
With that lost Pleiad Star ?

XV.

Now the slight streamlet he has past—
Has reached the beechen tree at last ;
And thinking in his feeling's dearth,
As he self-probed his lone heart's wound—
(Between two stools we come to earth,)
He threw himself upon the ground,
And sorrowful on tree and brook
And through the woods cast mournful look.

XVI.

Lo ! from the beech some one had hacked—
Whose could the envious hatchet be ?
The marrer had not woodman's tact—
The names and the embroidery,
Which King had carved there to the life,
At cost of more than one good knife,

No graven tree could match it ;
(But man woos often ere he wives,)
“ And scissors cut as well as knives,”
And so, it seems, does hatchet.

XVII.

Thus, as King mused beside the beech,
A rustling sound salutes his ear—
(Once how he longed such sounds to hear)—
Now starts he to find Helen near,
And frozen are his parts of speech.

XVIII.

She went upon an impulse there—
Its sources were of various hues—
So sweetly breathed the Spring's fresh air ;
Perhaps she might have had the blues ;
And knowing that her walking shoes
(Though country-made, she thought them neat)
Would well protect her fairy feet,
She felt like tripping forth, and then
How natural to pass the wood—
The wood where, as a girl, she played—
Where, as a woman, oft she strayed—
The fairest flower by glade or glen,

A queen in sylvan solitude.
Alas! that solitude was broken
By vows, that now are broken too;
And there is of that breakage token—
And if not in her eye so blue,
Nor in her cheek that holds its hue,
Yet know you not that there is grief
That has no utterance in word,
Of which no human tongue has told,
Which practised eye cannot behold—
Which stronger is, because relief
Was never sought or heard!

XIX.

And old maids say, that china ware
Of purest earth, ycleped porcelain,—
Of such are hearts of maidens fair,
Though it be broken quite in twain—
If it be joined with proper care,
Will show no crack or even stain,
And they to you will almost swear
It breaks not there again.
Yet lovers, strike it with your finger,
You'll find that golden bowl will give
No more the sounds, which once would linger

Within its cell, as if they'd live
Obedient to your touch for ever—
Now grates that sound upon your ear ;
Pray hold the bowl your organ near,
You'll find it echoes—never.

XX.

Tread on a belle's dress at a ball,
Or on her silken slipper tread,
That holds a throbbing corn in thrall—
Will she not toss a haughty head,
Yet start as if her peace had fled ?
Thus started Helen, when she met
King by that laughing rivulet,
Which, with an air, she quick recrossed,
And back at him her dark locks tossed—
Just as we fling defiance back
To foeman, who has crossed our track ;
Yet did her woman's nature steal
A glance, as quick she hurried off,
Which looks of other days reveal,
Mingled with an intent to scoff.

XXI.

King felt as if he'd like to creep
Into the smallest kind of nut,

And all forgotten and asleep
Be there for ever shut.

XXII.

Rallying at last—upon a bill—
A worn-out bill, which on this day
He had made promises to pay—
And, as he could not those fulfil,
Could it have been the impending ill
That hastened him from town away ?
Upon this vile leaf, bailiff-dotted,
With ever-pointed pencil, Joe,
Avoiding where the place was blotted,
Thus spoke his everlasting woe :

'THE BEECHEN TREE.

1.

He carved two names upon the beechen tree,
Encircling them with a deep-graven heart ;
Beneath its shade young Helen vowed to be
His loved and loving—when she rose to part,
As Summer's twilight deepened into dark,
He stay'd behind her there and carved the beechen bark

2.

He stay'd behind her, for there was a feud
Between their houses, and he might not go

Beside her to the house beyond the wood,

Else might their loves be fruitful but in woe :
That tree became their trysting-place—there she
Came often through the wood, humming a melody.

3.

And, with a like intent, he careless came,

As if a fisher loitering to the brook—

O ! how they spoke of the deep nurtured flame !

And when they parted, how he loved to look
After that form that brightened so the wood—
And when at last 'twas lost, how sad the solitude !

4.

Years past : unwished, yet by a master power,

Their vows were broken, and they met by chance
Beneath that tree, in summer's twilight hour ;

Each started, as they met each other's glance ;
And strangely to their minds uprose their youth—
The tree—the graven name—the oft-vowed pledge of truth.

5.

Their names had been cut out from the tree's side—

Its sickly greenness told how deep the scar :
He looked upon her with a sullen pride,
And she turned from him hurrying afar.

He did not watch her as she homeward went—
But left with a dark brow, upon the past intent.

6.

No other name can be engraven there,
In the first freshness of that beechen tree—
And she may listen to another's prayer,
And he to other maids may bend the knee ;
Yet in their hearts abides for aye the token
Of the first vows they made, now miserably broken !

CANTO IV.

EMIGRATION.

I.

“WESTWARD, the star of empire takes
Its way,” says Bishop Berkley’s lay,
And that, thought Joe, is what I say.
Quotations and resolves he makes
At once—and soon is far away.

II.

But on the night before he went,
To cheer his last leave-taking,
He gave a supper, where was blent
So much of frolic, merriment,
It seemed a merry-making—
To show his withers were unwrung
By Helen Fudge or Slander’s tongue—

As matin cock was waking,
The coming song he gayly sung—
Then in the coach his *corpus* flung.

ANACREONTIC FAREWELL.

We'll drink to those who are drinking now,
Who on joys like ours are ever thinking ;
Who fill the bowl with a laughing brow,
And thus are ever drinking, drinking :
Then, dearest, fill my cup for me,
And I will fill thy cup for thee ;
Thus will we love and wine impart,
And pour their gladness in the heart.

We'll drink to those who are roving now
From fair to fair, as we are roving,
Who give to each a passing vow,
And thus are ever loving, loving :—
Then, dearest, &c.

Come, kiss me, while you brim the bowl ;
Now, while its liquid joys are streaming,
We'll taste the grape's delicious soul,
While thy dark eye is beaming, beaming :—
Then, dearest, &c.

What's life ?—a desert's cheerless woe,
And we are pilgrims onward going,
And wine's the sparkling fountain's flow,
To cheer us onward, flowing, flowing :—
Then, dearest, &c.

And by that fountain blooms a flower—
Woman—when our joys are cloying,
We'll bear our wine-cup to her bower,
And thus for aye be joying, joying :—
Then, dearest, &c.

Fill deep, for it is early yet—
Be far away the thought of roaming—
We saw the glorious day-god set,
And o'er the hills he's coming, coming —
Then, dearest, &c.

With the fair dawn I haste away,
To the far West my footsteps turning,
Where Freedom, like the shining day,
Wide o'er the land is burning, burning :—
Then, dearest, &c.

Yet will I bear ye in my heart,
With every sense of gladness living,

With all that friendship can impart,
And all that love is giving, giving :—
Then, dearest, &c.

We lit the lamp of law together,
And when, alas ! it wanted trimming,
We sought, like birds, less murky weather,
The generous wine-cup brimming, brimming :—
Then, dearest, &c.

We've met in many a festive hall,
And whispered low to beauty list'ning,
And sought in vain to tell of all
With which the eye was glist'ning, glist'ning :—
Then, dearest, &c.

We joined our hearts in boyhood's glee,
When all the world seemed made for laughing,
And now, if parted we must be,
Why, brim the bowl—be quaffing, quaffing :—
Then, dearest, fill my cup for me,
And I will fill thy cup for thee ;
Thus will we love and wine impart,
And pour their gladness in the heart.

III.

How well that driver winds his horn !
Deep in a murky, morbid morn,
 At two o'clock precisely,
Away the bounding mail stage bears
Our hero, but without his cares ;
 Those he had left, most wisely,
With all those promises to pay,
Which had been burdens on the way.

IV.

If touched in heart, he's sound in limb :
 Here Walter Scott and Talleyrand,
 And Chatham, lover of our land ;
 And ever-glorious Grattan, and
 Argesilaus, of Spartan fame,
 And Timour, justly called the lame,
And Byron, were all fools to him :
Men who for ups and downs seemed sent,
But most when they a walking went :
And frail old Milton, what was he—
 For whom the light celestial shone
 Upon his mental path alone ;—
Or Homer, blind as blind could be,
Or Ossian—let us name the three—
Men who we well know could not see

The nose before them—to compare
To Joe, who could forthwith outstare
A ball-room's gallant companie.

These fellows, though, knew how to climb
The steep, where each could write his name,
And call on trumpet-bearing Fame,
And bid her speak it unto Time—
And bid Time speak it unto air,
As long as rolled an echo there.

V.

You take this, sir, for a digression ;
But were you ever westward driven,
Where Pittsburgh, like a deep transgression,
Looks black, and smells and smokes to heaven ?
Then have you crept from stage o'erset—
And, thankful if your limbs were saved—
In miry road, all dripping wet,
The cold and cheerless midnight braved,
And left some fellow-traveller lone,
In broken stage, with broken bone.

VI.

At first Joe noticed not the scene,
But thought of those from whom he'd tore him—

Of what he was, and might have been,
And of tramontane lands before him.
But when on Laurel-hill the stage
Stopped for a while to rest the steeds,
O, how his poet-fancy feeds
On nature's outstretched, gorgeous page :
To the horizon blue, around
O'er flood and forest, hill and river,
He looked with kindling rapture bound,
And felt that he could look forever :
From Nature's altars to the skies,
How beautiful the mists uprise
O'er the deep-wooded mountain's side ;
While in the valley's verdant breast,
As quietly the waters rest
As an encircled bride :
And far away in distant view,
Rests the blue sky on mountain blue.

VII.

There's champagne in this mountain air—
Behold those humble dwellings there,
Perched in the mountain solitude ;
Is not the scene surpassing fair ?
And when the wintry storms intrude,

And those dark forests flout the sky,
Their dwellers look, like Tell, on high—
And smile, as the dark storm goes by,
Proud of their home's wild liberty.

VIII.

And Liberty is proud of them ;
Her eyrie is with eagle hearts !
(For long she cannot bless the plain,)
And they for her will sternly stem
The hosts that press from servile marts—
Slaves to some stolen diadem—
And greet her with a loud acclaim,
And plant her banner on the steep,
And light her beacon fires—and keep
Such watch as those free Spartans kept
When Xerxes and his millions slept.

IX.

Joe thought of him, a madcap wight,
Who, from a Bedlam broke away¹
(There's method in this madman's say,)
And wandered to this glorious height,
When o'er it broke a summer's day—
And stretching forth to eastern land

Prophetic voice and lifted hand—
(For madmen once were held to be
The instruments of prophecy)—
Spoke loud the words of high command ;
As if, to marshalled men in order,
He bid “blue bonnets cross the border,”
And called on nations, empires, states,
To listen to his voice and fates—
To right about and follow far,
Far Westward, Freedom’s guiding star !

X.

Joe did not wonder, as he gazed
Wide o’er the glory of the earth,
O’er which the sun in gladness blazed,
As when the Maker gave it birth,
And said that it was good, and smiled :
Joe did not wonder Evil’s fount—
That Tempter who had caused the fall,
Led the meek Saviour from the wild
Up to the top of highest mount ;
And as the greatest bribe to err,
There offered him those broad lands all,
If he would be his worshipper !
(Think of the Devil’s brazen phiz,

When not an inch of land was his !)
'Tis ever thus with Satan, though ;—
He'll offer you as bright a bribe,
As eye can see, or tongue describe,
Or lying Hope bestow ;
And when he's bound your soul in chains,
You've got your trouble for your pains !

XI.

The Indian, and the bounding deer—
The forest-roving pioneer ;²
Brave Braddock, on his bloody bier—
The scene where he had breathed his last,
When frightened men were flying past ;
When rushed the red men like a flood
Upon them in the wildering wood,
And youthful Washington bestrode
The field of battle, like a god !

At Pittsburgh, Joe did not awaken,
With any thought of lang syne days,—
Nor even give them passing praise :
'Most to a mummy was he shaken,—
And the development which lies
On the head's side, and there supplies
The thought poetical, of ideality,

Was knocked in, out of all reality !
A bounce, that nearly caused contusion,
Had spread there wild and dark confusion !
No more he felt self-eulogy,
As, with his thumb in Christmas pie,
Felt little Jacky Horner ;
As when some cabin built to brave
The mountain blast or torrent wave,
Some fierce tornado makes our grave,
Those bumps became the grave of rhyme,
In which, like bards of England's prime,
It slept in Poet's Corner.

XII.

King in a steamer quickly took
A passage to the cities west,
Meaning to have at all a look,
And settle in the best.
Relieved from the knee-crooking stage,
As if he lay in lap of earth,
He stretched himself within his berth,
And thought upon his pilgrimage.
The steamer moves—the paddles plash—
And soon upon their way they dash.
As is the custom of the crew,

When they approach, or bid adieu,
To large town or to city,
O'er wave and wood—o'er glade and glen,
Rung forth a merry ditty ;
And Joe, caught quick, with flying pen,
This song of western steamboat men.

SONG.


1.

Ye mariners, who sail the seas,
I'm told you've made the boast,
Of all who go upon the waves,
You hold yourselves the toast ;
But list to me, ye mariners,
As bounding on ye go,
A-cracking up your merry ship,
With your wild yo ! heave ho !

2.

I'll not deny, ye mariners,
It is a joyous thing,
To see ye dashing on your way,
Like bird upon the wing ;
Ye wave a farewell hand to home,
And then away ye sweep,

•



To where the blue sky rests upon
The bosom of the deep.

3.

But mariners—but mariners—
When loud the storm doth blow,
Ye have a toilsome time, my boys,
With your wild yo! heave ho!
And when at last the calm comes on,
And ye swing upon the sea,
How sad are then your thoughts of home,
And sadder they must be.

4.

Oh, how ye at the sweepers tug,
And how ye have to tow,
And faint and weary comes the cry
Then of your yo! heave ho!
Ye say ye hate to hear our noise,
Our puffing, and our buzz;
But don't forget, ye mariners,
'That ' pretty is that does!'

5.

Blow high or low, ye mariners,
'Tis all the same to us;

The storm may blow its last breath out,
What care we for the fuss!
And I've not told of shipwrecks, boys,
Upon the stormy main;
The long-boat swamped, and the wild crew,
Who'll ne'er see land again.

6.

To be rowed up a great salt sea,
Beats rowing up Salt River—
And where we'd strike a snag and land,
Why, you'd be gone forever!
We go ahead so steadily,
And never give a lurch,
Ye'd take us for a hide-bound chap
A-hurrying to church.

7.

But though we puff as stately, boys,
As any Dutchman smokes,
We eat the best, and drink the best,
And crack the best of jokes.
Why, mariners, ye're months away,
On hard junk beef ye feed,
While we have turkey, toast, and tea,
And every thing we need!

8

In every port, ye boast there's one
To spend the cash ye give her ;
Why, we have sweethearts, mariners,
On both sides of the river !
We ask not for the starry lights,
To cheer us on our way ;
We've eyes that flash from every wood
The clearest kind of ray !

9.

There's Sal, she peeps from Cypress-swamp,
And Bet from Buckeye-Beach ;
And we've a passing word for both,
And a sly kiss for each.
I'm told you say, 'cause boilers burst,
Uncertain is our breath ;
To die by bursted boilers, boys,
Is just our nat'ral death !

10.

And don't ye die in calm and storm,
And don't ye die in slaughter ?
And don't they wrap you in a sheet,
And chuck you in the water ?

You're food for fishes, mariners !
Ha ! ha ! your faces fall !
Well, here's a health, my boys, to each,
And a long life to all.

11.

Broad, broad lands are between us, boys,
But our rivers seek the sea—
And by them, in our merriment,
We send good luck to ye :
Good luck to ye, brave mariners !
And mind, my boys, whenever
Ye weary of your ocean life,
Ye're welcome on the river.

XIII.

Gay bounding on Ohio's breast,
Most wooingly Joe sought the nine ;
Expecting that from all the rest
Of rhymers, he would take the shine.
And did not great Glendower call
Wild spirits from the vasty deep ?
But did they burst their ocean thrall,
Or, disregarding, sleep ?
The muses would have smiled on Joe—

But just as they were drawing near,
As he was walking to and fro,
The dinner bell rang close and clear.
He started from his rhyming fit—
Said he would take a bite—a snack,
And then, if they his rhymes would back,
He'd make a most transcendent hit ;
But being miff'd, the muses backed him,
Like the false friends of Jack the wit,
Or Mrs. Lead, who, you know, sacked him.
Thus, as he took his hasty ration,
(Forgive the proverb's forced quotation,)
The 'biter was completely bit.'

XIV.

Meanwhile, with a delighted eye,
Joe held a seat, a lady by ;
Glanced from the table through the door,
At beetling cliff, that rose on high
Abruptly from the winding shore :
Paused from a goose's keen dissection,
Attracted her in that direction,
By pointing where the waves were straying,
As if they went the cliffs to meet—
And uttering the very thought,

Which, in his rhymes, he would have wrought,

He said they looked like childhood, playing
At a huge giant's feet.

The lady smiled—said, “Now, I know it—

I always thought you were a poet”—

Which Joe receives with silent smile,

But cultivates a blush the while ;

And then, to show the holy fire

Had condescendingly descended,

And flickered once upon his lyre ;

The following lines, which he'd intended

For a fair “Peri of the West,”

He read at that sweet girl's request :

L I N E S .

1.

Lady, when I became a wanderer,

I laid my feelings in the cold dark urn ;

Made of my heart its passion's sepulchre,

And said, the dim sepulchral flame should burn

But for the dead, who could not be estranged,—

O'er memory's treasures, that could not be changed,—

That love should come, but as a mourning friend,

Who sadly seeks the tomb, o'er some loved form to bend.

2.

That form was the creation of my mind,
Which I had dreamed of, but not realized—
The bright original I could not find,
And therefore was the picture the more prized :
Sometimes I thought to meet her—then, perchance,
Cold reason told me it was but romance ;
A hope, to which the love-fraught mind gives birth,
When, from its dreams of heaven, it moulds a form of earth.

3.

Even as the sculptor,* who of old displayed
The various beauties that bewitched his eye,
Till from the whole a glorious form he made,
And realized his passionate phantasy—
And then became a worshipper : I took
From many a dream, and many a poet's book,
And many a form that lived upon my sight,
That fairy love of mine, and made her my delight.

4.

And should we meet, within the glittering throng,
The being that our fond hope burned to prove ;
The cynosure of beauty and of song,
Do we not feel, at first sight, years of love ?

* Pygmalion.

The form that on our dreaming fancy beamed,
Comes to us waking, even as we dreamed—
As instantaneous as fair Venus came,
With lips to speak of love, and eye to light its flame.

5.

O! lady, lady, I have often mourned
For that bright being, as for one no more ;
But when I saw thee, the dear dream returned,
Till with my early love my heart ran o'er.
The sculptor wooed his marble form in vain,
Until the Gods took pity on his pain :
But thou, belov'd one, with the gentle breast,
Sure, in thy panting heart, young love might be a guest.

XV.

In the brag city of the West,³
A month or two our hero stayed,
With his attorneyship displayed ;
And did, I ween, his very best,
In gay boudoir, and buckeye shade.
An anti-Hebrew, who had got
A million, by the death of swine,
And speculations, and what not,
Oft pressed him, warmly, home to dine,
And gave him parties, where his daughter,

In great Burke's "swinish multitude,"
Did quite as many deeds of slaughter
As, in the real one, father could.
'Tis strange, the more swine father slew,
The more of beaux the daughter drew !

XVI.

Just as Joe reconciled his heart
To save his bacon, and to take
A pork-house, for the maiden's sake ;
An invitation, on the part
Of the fair lady's parents, came,
In the full force of their joint name,
Inviting him, three days from thence,
To spend with them a gladsome eve.
As the stiff lackey took his leave,
Joe called him back on some pretence,
And learned that on that very night,
A bride would be *his* lady bright !

XVII.

Darkly Joe rose and took his way
To the post-office, for he thought,
Or rather hoped—(the truth to say)—
That some good news the mail had brought.

'Twas natural !—for when one quarter
Throws o'er our projects coldest water ;
We turn our castle-building schemes
To spots where something like the beams
Of star-light through the cold rain gleams.

XVIII.

They gave a letter to his call—
From Dobbin 'twas, his friend o'er all :
He spoke of friendship at great length,
And said, theirs was of Roman strength ;
Gave long accounts of mutual friends,
And of their private views and ends :
And made, by way of postscript, mention,
That after Joe forsook intention
Of making Helen, Mrs. King,
He thought himself could do the thing,
And made accepted offering :
“ Hope you don't think your roost I'm robbing ?
Your friend, forever, Henry Dobbin.”
As some one after this was cleaning
The office occupied by Joe,—
Who farther west went months ago,—
These stanzas, of an easy meaning,
Were found upon his office floor,
Amidst the rubbish, near the door.

STANZAS TO HELEN.

1.

Lady, thou art changed indeed—

I may not love thee now—

But view thee as an idle creed,

Unworthy of a vow.

Yet once thy love was all to me,

It was a courted destiny—

(Such as his day-dreams show
To the fondly trusting boy,
Whose fancy is as full of joy
As earth is full of woe.

2.

I woo'd thy love, as prophets woo

The hour they've promised long ;

Whose happy scenes should all be true,

And fairy-like as song.

How very vain the phantasy,

Of those who hope and hope for aye,

Fond trusters to the last—

Who, like the Summer's insect thing,

Sport carelessly on sunlit wing,

Till comes the chilling blast !

3.

And then it dies, as my hope dies !
No ! never to relume—
Devoted as it highest flies
To an untimely tomb.
How often in the moonlight grove,
When we have pledged our mutual love,
You've pointed to the star,
And spoke of your unchanging soul—
The needle's truth, and of the pole—
And of the mariner !

4.

This is love's frailest common-place,
And written oft as spoken ;
It is the lover's word of grace,
Before his vows are broken :
Yet you—you spoke with such a look,
That truth, as in the Sybil's book,
Seemed clothed in every word :
And I—I listened and believed !
And who may not be thus deceived)
Who feels it as he heard ?

5.

Thou queen of the voluptuous throng,
Where pleasure holds her reign ;—
No more I hear thy siren song,
Or court thy proffered chain ;
(No more the meeting hour of gladness,)
(No more the parting hour of sadness,)
Shall light or cloud my brow ;
You broke the vow I loved the best !
I feel I have the power to jest
With any other vow.

6.

They're like thee, in this Western land,
As lovely as thou art ;
But then, they have a warmer hand,
And wear a truer heart.
I may not kneel at any shrine,
So soon since I arose from thine,
I might mistake the maid ;
And yet, O ! for the early dream,
Of her I left o'er hill and stream
I'd be again betrayed !

7.

Betrayed! No, not betrayed by thee!

'Twas manhood's sober thought

That proved the cold reality

(My boyish fancy wrought

To every virtue, every bliss.

Yet who, for such a dream as this—

Who would not be a boy,

With woman for his fairy queen,

And earth as one bright gorgeous scene,

A fairy land of joy?

8.

Yet oftentimes, when I sorrowing pine

For those I've left behind me—

The friends who bound their hearts with mine,

And ever thus shall bind me—

As oft as I recall the hours

When law was left for lady bowers,

And reason left for rhyme—

I think of those who round thee hung,

The love-note of thy syren tongue,

And of our trysting time.

9.

And when I clasp a friend's warm hand,
Who, like me, loves the West ;
Leaving afar our father land,
Where thou art loveliest ;
'Tis sweet with him to talk of thee,
Thy smile, thy look, thy witchery,
Thy beauty, and thy art ;
And when I hear it all, unmoved,
I wonder if I ever loved,
So very calm's my heart.

10.

I'm from thee many a weary mile,
Where rolls *La Belle* along—
I love its ripple's song and smile—
'Tis like thy smile and song.
So truly it reflects the scene,
The sunny ray, the changing green,
The clear o'erhanging heaven ;
So truly, when I've looked on thee,
Thou gav'st each love-look back to me,
'Till I have thought love given.

11.

(O Lady! in this changing world,)
Wild passions strange and strong,)
On bear us like a leaf, wind-whirled,
With varying fate along !
But yester-eve, this bounding river
Wore holy calm, as if forever ;
Now rolls it darkly free ;
Thus I, who bid my heart be still,
Now feel it bursting, 'gainst my will,
As wildly unto thee !

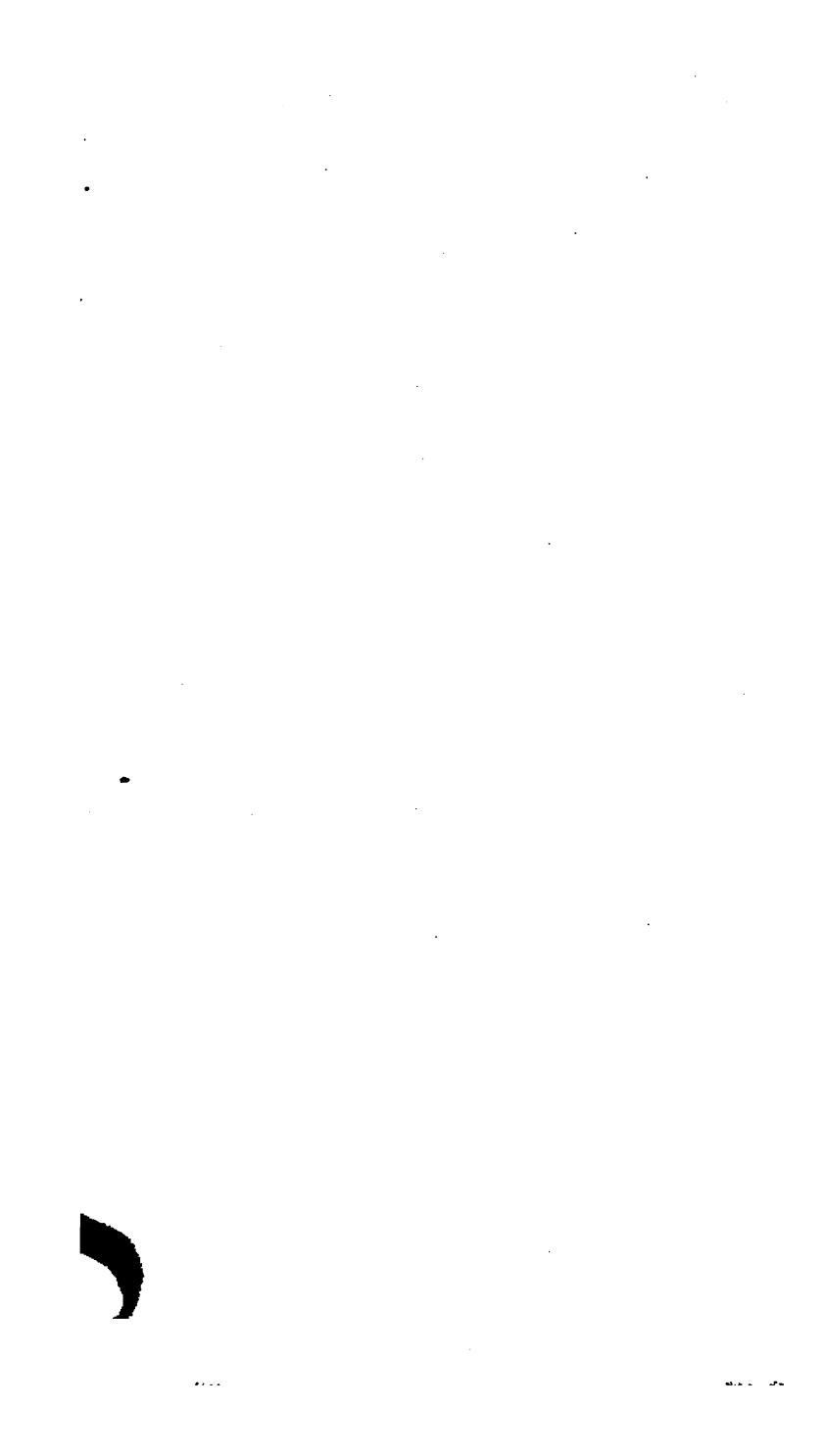
12.

Alas ! I am a wanderer
From those who love me best—
Who, when it was my lot to err,
Relieved an aching breast :
From friends who loved my lowly name,
And never heard the word of blame,
But to defend their friend ;
And here, o'er mountain and o'er flood,
I pour to them my gratitude—
'Tis all I have to send.

13.

O! that I could my dark thoughts cast
Upon thee, lovely river;
And know, as on thy bright waves passed,
They'd pass with them forever!
Lady, we yet may meet again,
When memory shall no longer pain,
And love no longer sigh!
No more, no more, may I adore thee!
Enough! the world is all before me!
My lady-love, good bye!

THE END.



NOTES.

CANTO I.

¹ Like Hudibras he felt expand
His heart, as Cupid took "his stand
Upon the widow's jointure land."—p. 14.

"But all in vain: he'd got a hurt
O' th' inside of a deadlier sort,
By Cupid made, who took his stand
Upon a widow's jointure land!"

Hudibras, Canto 3, part 1, line 309.

² And lean, like Lara, 'gainst the wall.—p. 18.

"He leaned against the lofty pillar nigh,
With folded arms and long attentive eye."

Lara xxi. line 4.

Mr. McMyer chose the wall, perhaps, because there was no pillar near
by.

CANTO II.

¹ Saying, that "declarations made
By dying man 'neath mortal blow,

Could be with all their force arrayed

'Gainst his indicted foe.—p. 31.

See Starkie on Evidence, Vol. I. p. 28, Vol. II. p. 262.

I have heard the events of this canto related as facts ; but whether the narrator, who was a great story-teller, stuck to truth, or borrowed from the original Joe Miller, I cannot say.

* I'd make him think an Indian band,
With rods in every brawny hand,
Was pressing hard behind him ;
And never council-house should spread
Its safety o'er his suffering back.—p. 39.

In running the gauntlet among the Indians, it was generally the custom to compel the prisoner to run between two files of men, women, and children, placed promiscuously, with the council-house before him, which, if he was able to reach amidst the shower of blows that were aimed at him, his life was spared.

I remember to have heard Simon Kenton, a celebrated old pioneer of the West, give a graphic account of his running the gauntlet in this way.

CANTO III.

¹ "Go it, old fellow," said the Kemble,
Addressing this same Father Time.—p. 52.

"Saturday, December 1st, 1832.

First day of the last month of the year—go it, old fellow."

Frances Ann Butler's Journal, Vol. II. p. 1.

CANTO IV.

- ¹ Joe thought of him, a madcap wight,
Who from a bedlam broke away.—p. 70.

I have seen this little incident related of a madman, somewhere, as a fact, but I have taxed my memory in vain to remember where.

- ² The Indian and the bounding deer,
The forest-roving pioneer, &c.—p. 72.

The scene of Braddock's defeat is about eight miles from Pittsburg, near Turtle Creek. It was there, as our readers know, Washington first displayed his great military talents.

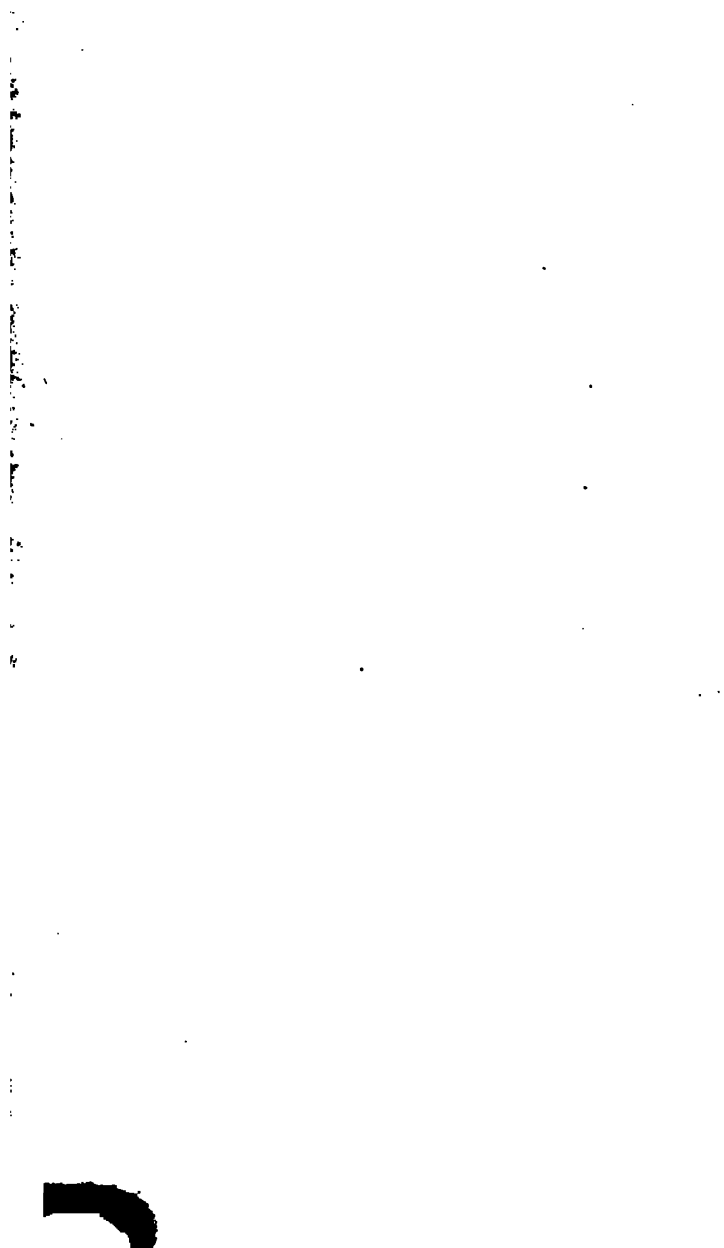
- ³ In the brag city of the West.—p. 82.

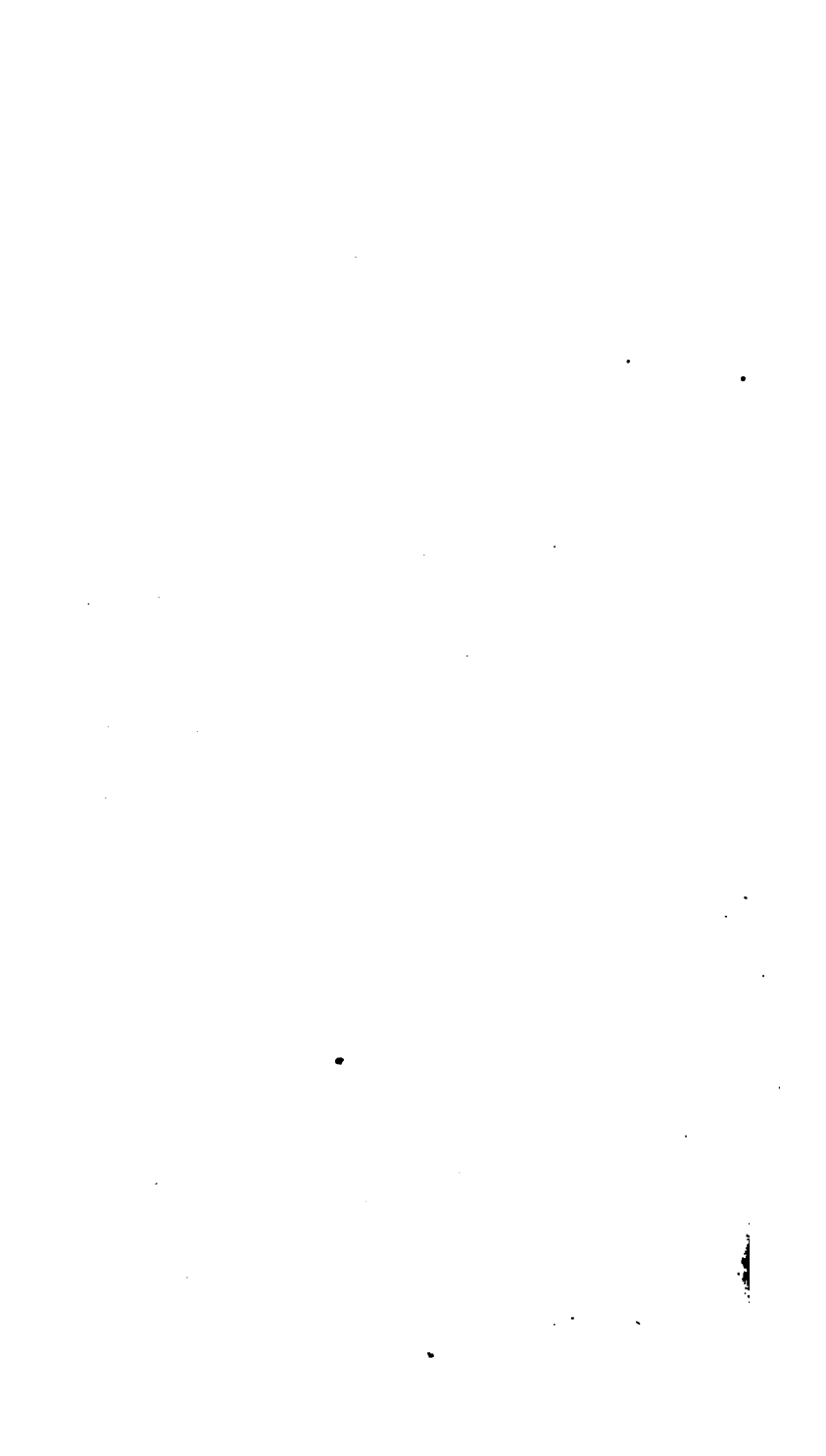
Cincinnati, as is well known, is called the "Queen of the West," and so she certainly is, if beauty designates the queen. In wealth and power St. Louis, it is thought, will ere long more than rival her. Cincinnati is, however, one of the most beautiful cities in the Union, if not the most beautiful. Her fame for her pork and her poetry (?), her arts and her artisans, is spreading fast.

- ⁴ I'm from thee many a weary mile,
Where rolls *La Belle* along.—p. 89.

La belle Rivière.—The Ohio was so called by the French voyagers.

Friendship without
respect is a misnomer.







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